

Defined or  
legitimization which  
differs greatly form  
culture



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Defined in the context of an adult male and a female, it entails sex relation between the two and the children born out of such a relationship.

There could be many ways to define marriage, but since the concept involves reference to a set of rules-customs and practices and also the social approval or legitimization which differs greatly from culture to culture; there cannot be a universally applicable definition of marriage without any exception. Broadly speaking, Marriage may be defined as ' A socially sanctioned sex relationship involving two or more persons of opposite sex- whose relationship is expected to endure beyond the time required for gestation and birth of children'. Rules of Marriage: Marriage in every society is subject to certain rules, which may be prohibitive, prescriptive or preferential. These rules everywhere answer to the question can marry whom.

In all societies there are some prohibitions on mating between persons in certain relationships or from certain groups. The most universal being that of mating between certain kinds of kinds such as mother and son, father and daughter, brothers and sisters. Such prohibition or taboo always extends beyond the immediate family group.

This rule is called as the rule of ' incest'. The violation of this rule in primitive societies is invariably associated with a sense of horror as a result of expected divine punishment. In civilized societies however, ethical notions may be associated with this rule as such mating are also considered as uncivilized. Endogamy: The term endogamy refers to marriage within one's

own group. The group may be defined in order to keep the privileges and the wealth of group intact.

Practice of endogamy further consolidates the group by establishing group identity in terms of 'we' and 'they' as in-marrying groups. Tribal endogamy is a universal phenomenon. Endogamy forms the backbone of the structure of caste system in India. In America racial groups and social classes tend to be endogamous.

In case of social classes, opportunity, cultural norms and similarity of life style all contribute maintaining endogamy, though theoretically speaking social classes are identified as open groups. Exogamy: Of sex with marriage, prohibition of incest produces an almost universal rule of exogamy within nuclear family group of parents, children and brothers and sisters. Very often, the descent groups based on blood relations such as lineages and clans are also exogamous.

Members of the same totemic group also generally avoid marrying between themselves. Apart from reducing conflicts over sex in cooperating groups such as hunting and fishing units, practice of exogamy leading to alliances between larger groups are of great adaptive significance for humans. Such alliances may have economic, political or religious components. Wandering early hunting and food gathering bands exchanged women to try peace and ensure social ties of co-operation. These alliances are important among people who must move around in search of food, in order to take advantage of the availability of food supply. Exchange of women ensures inter group sociability.

In peasant societies, in north India the rule of exogamy applies to the villages as such.